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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FREETOWN 001042

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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SL](#)  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL COURT UPDATE: COURT PRESIDENT TO TRAVEL TO  
US

REF: FREETOWN 1028

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas N. Hull for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Justice George Gelaga King informed the Ambassador December 22 that he planned to travel to New York to meet with the Court's Management Committee on January 22. He also requested Post's assistance to arrange meetings on January 23-24 at the Department with IO, S/WCI, AF, and L. In a separate meeting with PolOff on December 21, Deputy Registrar von Hebel said that donor financial support was increasing, and that the President was taking a more assertive role in Court management. Von Hebel criticized Registrar Munlo,s leadership for low staff morale and retention. END SUMMARY.

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COURT'S PRESIDENT WILL TRAVEL TO US IN JANUARY  
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¶2. (SBU) On December 22, the Ambassador met with President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) Justice George Gelaga King. King told the Ambassador that he would travel to New York and Washington in late January to meet with the Court's Management Committee and Department officials. He requested Post,s assistance to arrange meetings with IO, S/WCI, AF, and L on January 23-24.

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PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO CASSESE REPORT  
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¶3. (C) King said that he had not yet read the recently-released Cassese report, but understood that there were a number of recommendations that had already been implemented. He noted the new rule that requires the President to reside full-time in Sierra Leone and allows for the incumbent to stand for re-election. He felt that his presence in-country had helped to improve management of Court issues. He also said that the Management Committee had implemented new rules, which will speed up the legal process, although he did not clarify what those were. His overall assessment was that Cassese's "intervention" was successful.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador asked if King would meet with members of Congress during his trip. King said that he would, but said that he would need to establish new relationships as many of the chairs of the committees had changed. The Ambassador informed King that Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Williamson was planning to visit Sierra Leone early in 2007. King said that he would welcome Ambassador Williamson,s first visit to Sierra Leone.

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TRIAL UPDATES  
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15. (C) King reported that the Court's judges would soon be writing judgments for the AFRC and CDF cases, and that he had instructed them to finish the judgments before any of them departed for The Hague for the Charles Taylor trial. He doubted that the Taylor trial would start as originally scheduled in April, but could not see it slipping to a September start date. The Ambassador said that the USG would like to see the case move forward, and that there may be a need for coordination of witnesses for the Taylor trial and his son's trial in the U.S. King responded that this should not be a problem.

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REGISTRAR CONTROVERSY  
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16. (C) King told the Ambassador that Registrar Lovemore Munlo would not accompany him to the U.S. in January. He said that Deputy Registrar Herman von Hebel and new Special Prosecutor Stephen Rapp would be along on the trip. He added that there was some controversy regarding the Registrar position and term length in office. According to King, he was under the impression that Munlo had been appointed for three years, but realized recently that it was for only 12 months. (Note: Munlo's term is set to expire in February of next year.)

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SUBSTITUTE JUDGE

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17. (C) King said that there would need to be an alternate judge selected in case anything happened to one of the three Taylor case judges or five appeals judges. The Ambassador asked how this person's position would be funded, to which King responded that there was enough financial support to fund this position.

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FUNDING AND LEGACY CONCERNS  
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18. (C) The Ambassador asked how the Court was progressing with donor contributions. King said that countries were starting to give contributions, and added that Deputy Registrar Herman von Hebel had been instrumental in convincing the Netherlands to pledge over three million Euros. The Ambassador explained the difficulties the Department currently faces while we are under a continuing resolution. He told King that he could not say what the implications would be for future funding for the Court, but assured King of continuing USG support. King thanked the Ambassador for the explanation and said that he would take it up with Department officials when he travels to Washington.

19. (C) The Ambassador and King also discussed Court legacy issues. The Ambassador said that although the Special Court is a wonderful facility, it would be difficult for the GoSL to maintain it. King said that this was a paramount consideration, and that he had told President Kabbah that the GoSL did not possess the capacity to run the facility and would need to find a new tenant.

110. (C) The Ambassador concluded the meeting telling King that the consular section would soon begin to process non-immigrant visas for official travel that could possibly save King's staff from having to travel to Conakry for visa interviews. King responded that this would be helpful to his staff who may need visas. King thanked the Ambassador for

his continuing support.

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UPDATE FROM DEPUTY REGISTRAR  
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¶11. (C) In a separate meeting with Deputy Registrar Herman von Hebel on December 21, von Hebel told PolOff that the Court's Management Committee had instructed the Court to develop budgets for FY 2007, 2008, and 2009 by March. He said that he felt that the Court could turn the corner in 2-3 months and begin to show more progress by meeting milestones as established by the completion strategy. He said that the Court would have an operational plan by January and had enough funds to operate through April or early May.

¶12. (C) Von Hebel also said that although President King is taking a more assertive role in Court management, morale remains low. He squarely blamed Registrar Munlo commenting that Munlo's micromanagement and distrust of staff had alienated many people, and that this had directly led to difficulties retaining staff. He admitted that his relationship with Munlo had been strained from the beginning, but felt that a change in leadership was necessary for the Court to move forward. He also felt that if he or someone else were named Registrar, the Management Committee would name a Sierra Leonean as Deputy.

¶13. (C) Von Hebel said that on the Management Committee, Ambassador Kanu supported keeping Munlo as Registrar and would threaten to use the "race card" if other members tried to get rid of Munlo. Von Hebel said that he had raised his concerns about Munlo with President King. He said that he felt that President King tacitly supported Munlo's removal. PolOff asked if von Hebel planned to stay at the Court. Von Hebel responded that he had other offers from the ICTY and Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but was committed to the Court.

HULL